

Message Text

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MIL ADDEES FOR POLADS

E.O. 11652: NA
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SUBJ: NEW CRISIS ABOUT NRW MINISTER PRESIDENT SUCCESSION

REF: DUSSELDORF 710

1. SUMMARY: HANS OTTO BAEUMER, LANDTAG DEPUTY AND HEAD OF THE SPD LOWER RHINE DISTRICT, INSTIGATED BY SUCCESSION CONTENDER JOHANNES RAU, TRIGGERED OFF A NEW CRISIS ABOUT THE REPLACEMENT OF HEINZ KUEHN AS MINISTER PRESIDENT OF NORTH RHINE-ESSTPHALIA (NRW). THE PARTY BRASS DID NOT CONTRADICT. THE FDP, AS COALITION PARTNER OF THE SPD WAS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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CAUGHT UNAWARES BUT ASSERTED ITS DETERMINATION TO CONTINUE THE COALITION UNTIL 1980. MEANWHILE THE CDU HAS MADE A COALITION OFFER TO THE FDP, AND OPPOSITION LEADER KOEPLER IS PREPARED TO RUN AGAINST ANY NOMINEE AS NRW MINISTER PRESIDENT. PUBLIC REACTION AGAINST THE SPD'S BICKERING ABOUT KUEHN'S SUCCESSION WAS NEGATIVE. THE SPD ITSELF HAS UNDERMINED KUEHN'S POSITION SO THAT

IT HAS BECOME ALMOST UNTENABLE. THE COUP HAS DIMINISHED
RAU'S CHANCES TO SUCCEED KUEHN. END SUMMARY.

2. HANS OTTO BAEUMER, LANDTAG DEPUTY AND HEAD OF THE
LOWER RHINE DISTRICT OF THE SPD TOOK THE OCCASION OF
THE ANNUAL DISTRICT CONVENTION OF HIS PARTY ON JUNE 17,
1978 TO TRIGGER OFF A NEW CRISIS ABOUT THE REPLACEMENT
OF HEINZ KUEHN AS MINISTER PRESIDENT. HE THANKED KUEHN
FOR HIS READINESS TO RELINQUISH HIS OFFICE PRIOR TO
THE HESSE AND BAVARIAN LANDTAG ELECTIONS ON OCTOBER 8,
1978, AND THEN CALLED KUEHN'S REPLACEMENT OVERDUE
BECAUSE HE IS WAY PAST HIS PRIME. WE WERE INFORMED THAT
AN AGREEMENT FOR ADVANCING THE RETIREMENT DATE HAD BEEN
REACHED BETWEEN KUEHN AND THE LANDTAG FACTION, BUT WITH
THE UNDERSTANDING THAT THE MATTER SHOULD BE TREATED
AS CONFIDENTIAL PENDING CONSULTATIONS WITH THE
FDP AS COALITION PARTNER.

3. NONE OF THE PARTY BRASS ATTENDING THE CONVENTION
TOOK EXCEPTION TO BAEUMER'S REMARKS. IN FACT, INFORMED
CIRCLES HAVE SAID THAT JOHANNES RAU, NRW MINISTER OF
SCIENCE AND RESEARCH AND NRW/SPD CHAIRMAN, ONE OF THE
TWO CONTENDERS FOR KUEHN'S JOB, HAD INSTIGATED
BAEUMER TO COMMIT THE INDISCRETION. THE DELEGATES
OBVIOUSLY HAD NO PARTICULAR OBJECTION BECAUSE THEY
REELECTED BAEUMER AS LOWER RHINE CHAIRMAN WITH A LARGE
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MAJORITY.

4. BAEUMER'S STATEMENTS STIRRED UP THE POLITICAL
SCENE IN NRW. THE HEADS OF THE OTHER THREE NRW/SPD
DISTRICTS POINTED OUT THAT BAEUMER'S DISCLOSURES WOULD
NOT CHANGE THE PARTY'S PLANS TO HOLD A SPECIAL
CONVENTION ON SEPTEMBER 17, 1978, TO SELECT A CANDIDATE
FOR KUEHN'S OFFICE. THEY DID NOT RULE OUT KUEHN'S
RETIREMENT PRIOR TO OCTOBER 8, 1978, THE DAY OF THE
LANDTAG ELECTIONS IN HESSE AND BAVARIA. THERE APPEARS
TO BE A VAGUE HOPE THAT THIS WOULD HELP THE COALITION
PARTNER, THE FDP, IN THESE ELECTIONS. CONVERSELY, THE
FEAR THAT A MAJOR ELECTION DEFEAT OF THE FDP IN HESSE
MAY CAUSE FDP DISSENTERS IN THE NRW LANDTAG TO VOTE
AGAINST THE SPD CANDIDATE AFTER KUEHN'S RESIGNATION
SEEMS TO BE MORE REALISTIC. HOWEVER, THE FINAL DECISION
ON THE TIMING OF KUEHN'S RESIGNATION AND SUCCESSION
IS TO BE ESTABLISHED TOGETHER WITH THE FDP. DR. HORST
LUDWIG RIEMER, NRW/FDP CHAIRMAN CONFIRMED THAT SUCH
TALKS ARE SCHEDULED FOR THE VERY NEAR FUTURE.

5. MEANWHILE THE CDU HAS NOT BEEN IDLE. OPPOSITION

LEADER HEINRICH KOEPLER IS PREPARED TO RUN AS COUNTER CANDIDATE AGAINST KUEHN'S SUCCESSOR AND HAS INVITED THE FDP TO FORM A COALITION WITH THE CDU, OFFERING THREE CABINET POSITIONS INSTEAD OF THE PRESENT TWO. THE FDP, CAUGHT BY SURPRISE BY KOEPLER'S OFFER, REJECTED COALITION TALKS WITH THE CDU AND REITERATED ITS DETERMINATION TO STICK TO THE COALITION WITH THE SPD UNTIL 1980.

6. STRANGELY ENOUGH POLITICAL CRISES IN NRW MOSTLY OCCUR, WHEN (OR BECAUSE) MINISTER PRESIDENT KUEHN IS OFF ON ONE OF HIS FREQUENT TRIPS TO THE FAR CORNERS OF THE GLOBE. THIS TIME HE WAS INFORMED OF THE NEWS IN THE PEOPLES REPUBLIC OF CHINA, WHENCE HE RETURNED LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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IMMEDIATELY, ALTHOUGH HIS HASTY RETURN WAS PRIMARILY MADE NECESSARY BY OPPOSITION DEMANDS FOR THE RESIGNATION OF INTERIOR MINISTER HIRSCH BECAUSE OF HIS ALLEGED ROLE IN THE MISHAP IN THE SCHLEYER INVESTIGATION. THE SPD GAVE KUEHN AN "UNLIMITED VOTE OF CONFIDENCE" UPON HIS ARRIVAL.

7. COMMENTS: BAEUMER'S INDISCRETION CREATED SOME SORT OF A SHOCK FOR THE NRW/SPD LANDTAG FACTION LEADERS, SINCE EVERYTHING SEEMS TO HAVE BEEN WORKED OUT IN DETAIL FOR KUEHN'S RESIGNATION. THE NRW/SPD LANDTAG FACTION HAD A STORMY SESSION ON JUNE 20 FROM WHICH RAU EMERGED WITH CONSIDERABLY DIMINISHED CHANCES, WHILE THE CHANCES OF HIS COMPETITOR, NRW FINANCE MINISTER DR. DIETHER POSSENER ARE INCREASING. THE FDP IS ALSO FINDING ITSELF IN AN AWKWARD POSITION AFTER HAVING WARDED OFF AN ATTEMPT TO UNSEAT KUEHN ONLY TWO MONTHS AGO (SEE REFTEL). THE WHOLE AFFAIR HAS BEEN BLOWN UP BY THE MEDIA AND ONCE MORE PROVIDED BAD PUBLICITY FOR THE SPD. KUEHN'S POSITION AS MINISTER PRESIDENT APPEARS TO BE UNDERMINED TO A POINT WHERE IT HAS BECOME UNTENABLE. DESPITE REPUDIATIONS THERE ARE PERSISTENT RUMORS THAT THE PRESENT COALITION CANNOT BE SURE OF THE SUPPORT OF ALL OF ITS 105 DEPUTIES, ESPECIALLY SINCE THE FDP DEFEATS IN LOWER SAXONY AND HAMBURG ON JUNE 4. KOEPLER ON THE OTHER HAND CAN RELY ON THE SUPPORT OF THE 95 CDU DEPUTIES. EACH VOTE LOST TO THE COALITION IS A GAIN TO THE OPPOSITION; YET KOEPLER WILL NEED 101 VOTES TO BECOME MINISTER PRESIDENT. DUX

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